

CALIFORNIA'S CROP PRODUCTION REPORT

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The decrease in production forecasts for most citrus crops are attributed to the hard freeze that hit the Central Valley in December 1998. Growers are trying to salvage any fruit that was usable, and a higher percentage of the fruit is expected to go to processing.

Navel Oranges - The *Navel orange* forecast is 34.0 million cartons, down 11% from January and down 61% from last season. The Navel orange growers in the San Joaquin Valley (90% of State's acreage) tried to salvage any fruit that was usable after the December freeze. Some Navel oranges were sent to fresh market, but many went to juice processors. In southern California, picking went well. No freeze damage occurred and a good quality crop was picked. Harvest is near the end in all areas of the State.

Valencia Oranges - The *Valencia orange* forecast is 34.0 million cartons, down 11% from January and down 32% from last season's production total. Picking of the Valencia orange crop began in late February in the desert area with good quality reported. Growers in southern California will begin their Valencia orange harvest soon, with good quality reported. In the San Joaquin Valley, the adverse effects of the December freeze became more apparent as spring arrived. Most of the fruit did not recover from the freeze, but some are expected to be picked for juice.

Grapefruit - The 1998-99 California *grapefruit* forecast is estimated at 17.0 million cartons, down 6% from last season's production, but up 6% from the January forecast. In the Central Valley, the damage that occurred from December's freeze appeared to have been overemphasized. While the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys experienced cooler temperatures than last year, most of the desert areas were warmer. As a result, grapefruit color and quality is excellent with a smooth and clean texture.

Lemons - The 1998-99 California *lemon* forecast is 36.0 million cartons, down 18% from the 1997-98 production of 44.0 million cartons, but unchanged from the January 1999 forecast. Lemon growers in District I (Central Valley) were heavily affected by the freeze during the latter part of December. Several growers reported that some lemons could be salvaged for juice. However, it is likely that lemons in the Central Valley that hadn't already been picked before the freeze were a complete loss to the fresh market. In District II (South Coastal Area), volumes of picks have been increasing, with light frost damage being observed in some lots. However, these lemons were within tolerance and no rejections were reported due to any frost damage. In District III (Desert Area), picking is near completion, with good quality reported. Defects included wind scar, sunburn, flat sides, and oil spotting.

Tangerines - The 1998-99 California *tangerine* forecast is 3.40 million cartons, up 6% from the January 1999 forecast of 3.20 million cartons, but down 29% from the 1997-98 production of 4.80 million cartons. In the Central Valley, the extremely cold temperatures during the latter part of December caused severe freeze damage to the tangerines. Heavy ice marks caused much of the fruit to be graded out to juice. In the Southern growing region, volume of picks remained low at this time. Eating quality and color have been excellent. Problems caused by frost have been minimal.

Strawberries - The 1999 California *strawberry* production is forecast at 14.8 million cwt., up 5% from the revised 1998 crop. Harvested acreage is estimated at 24,700 acres, up 2% from 1998. The yield is 600 cwt. per acre. A cold spring has slightly delayed production. The harvest from southern California has been good. The whitefly infestation problems for the Oxnard area appear to be under control. Aside from this, conditions are ideal and fruit size is large.